

## Facility Management in Nonprofit Organizations

The focus of this article is on managing and running a nonprofit facility where sports, recreation and other leisure activities occur. Today's JCC & YMCA facilities provide much more than a gymnasium for their members and guests. The modern sports facility usually has one or more of the following: indoor and/or outdoor aquatic complex, warm water therapy pools, lazy rivers, cardio-fitness, weight training and group exercise studios, fully equipped locker rooms, shower and towel areas, sauna, steam and massage and physical therapy areas, equipment storage, family changing rooms, food service/café/catering services, canteen areas, racquetball/squash courts, tennis facilities, softball fields, playgrounds, fitness trails and meeting rooms, day care facilities, retail shops and offices for those who run the various aspects of the facility.

### Important Competencies

Executive Directors (ED) who oversee both indoor and outdoor sport and leisure facilities face many decisions each day. Those who manage these venues for sports events are responsible for ensuring that everything runs smoothly for the membership, visitors and guests, community, the volunteers, and their own staff. The ED and their staffs need to excel in many areas including financial management, booking and scheduling of events, contract negotiation, risk management, building operations, human resource management, event planning and management and customer service.

JCC and YMCA buildings are treasures that turn individuals and families into a community and enables people of all ages to take part in rich experiences together. These facilities truly become

the central address for the communities they serve. JCC's & YMCA's often market and advertise to their members that their **facility** is "like their second home".

The setting for these rich experiences must be inviting, completely equipped and attractively maintained. Your facility must display a professional image to sustain the interest of your membership group. The numerous clubs that exist today are all in competition with each other. You must figure out what you can do to stand out from the rest of the competition. Facility bathrooms, locker rooms and wet areas should be gleaming. Strive to have your facility bathrooms cleaner than in your member's private home. All equipment should be spotless and in perfect working order. If a treadmill or elliptical trainer is not functioning properly, take it off the fitness room floor. There is nothing more unsightly than having equipment with "out of order" signs taped to them. This poorly reflects on your managerial capabilities. Finally your staff should endeavor to provide the most outstanding customer service to all those that enter your facility.

How you maintain and upkeep your facility is a direct reflection of the person in charge. The first impression, that immediate visual impact is often times sealed when your constituents walk thru the front **entrance** of your facility. Paying close attention to the details in preserving a first class environment will often separate you from the competition. You have **but** one chance to make that first impression. Can you imagine seeing buckets on the floor in a facility entrance lobby collecting rain water from a leaky roof? What kind of message do you think you'd be sending to your current or prospective members and how long do you think these members will retain their membership? This important entry area not only sets the tone for the entire facility and helps

establish **its** identity, but also should serve essential functions of providing a central informational and control point and space for community members to gather, formally or informally.

From a programmatic perspective, a JCC or YMCA main lobby generally affords space for some key functions that express or support the facility's purpose. First and foremost, your lobby serves as the main point of entry, where your receptionist provides welcome and greeting, and serves to usher program patrons and other visitors deeper into the facility. The front desk receptionist is often referred to as the “Director of First Impressions”. The goal is to offer a warm and friendly salutation to everyone entering and leaving the building.

The front desk receptionist is often the very first impression and sometimes the last that your member will have of your organization. An important decision is made in just a few critical seconds of time. In the first few seconds of a phone call or an onsite visit, your visitor will make a judgment about your organization and your brand regarding, whether they will call or visit again, if they will recommend your organization to others, and how much they like you. When you hire the right person to welcome your members and guests, be sure to train them on how to properly represent your brand, by doing so, you will be adding tremendous value to your organization.

### Safety & Risk Management

The society we live in today has become extremely litigious, with over 16 million lawsuits filed annually in state courts in the United States. At a rate of about one every two seconds, these

realities are becoming increasingly alarming. When litigation is considered in the context of a fitness center, the risk is no less significant. (Titlebaum, McGinnis & Daprano, 2011) ED's and their staffs are the entrusted custodians of the communities' million dollar assets and investments. There is an expectation that JCC & Y facilities will be operated in a professional, efficient and, most importantly, safe manner. It is a very significant responsibility to manage and operate these facilities in today's demanding, litigious and complex environment. To meet this high standard of performance and level of expectation, it is essential that good safety planning and emergency preparedness be an integral component in the daily operation of the JCC or YMCA facility.

Keeping everyone who visits your agency safe is not always an easy job! It should be understood that risk management plays a vital role in any sports and recreation program, and that the consequences of not assessing or controlling risks can range from increased lawsuits and insurance claims to financial devastation.

"Where there are fitness, recreation and sport activities, there are injuries. And unfortunately where there are injuries, there are lawsuits," said Doyice Cotten, professor emeritus in sport management at Georgia Southern University and owner of Sport Risk Consulting, Statesboro, Ga. A risk management program is a proactive approach to protect your agency from legal action as well as guarding against injuries in the first place. Risk management involves making decisions and implementing plans and policies so as to minimize injuries and loss and their effects on your organization, facility or event.

Through the establishment of a sound program of risk management, the ED can provide an environment that will conserve assets and resources in a systematic manner to minimize losses that would likely result if situations were out of his or her control. (Appenzeller, 2000)

According to (Nohr 2009) Risk Management is the process of decision making and implementation so as to minimize injuries and loss and their effects on your sport organization, facility or event. Furthermore, developing a risk management program will reduce the risks involved.

Risk is real for any JCC or YMCA, even well managed ones. Things occur when you least expect them to happen. Be prepared for your worst nightmare. An executive director should never pretend that all is well, and that nothing tragic will happen in your facility. Be prepared and face reality because accidents do happen. Risks are viewed broadly, people get hurt, data gets lost, roofs collapse, and employees resign and theft take place. Further examples of various risks include: firing of the chief executive, inability to fundraise, economic downturn, layoffs, building fire, computer crashes, philosophical differences between key employees, and extended leaves for managers. All of these are potential risks, and there are many others. When any of these come about, your organization will be at risk for malfunction, inefficiency, chronic struggle, financial loss, and even total failure.

Many facility professionals are faced with numerous situations that could be classified as worst nightmares. On one hand you may have to deal with a tragic and unfortunate situation like your roof collapsing. Immediately make sure no one in the facility was harmed, then without delay

call the insurance company, inform your board president, obtain bids for repair or replacement and get it fixed in a timely basis.

Though on another occasion, I was faced with something a little more complicated and stressful. I was working at my desk when a local police detective paid me a visit and showed up unannounced at my office. Apparently, a number of parents complained that their children were being abused by a youth worker. In a matter of minutes, I was witnessing a scenario where the police detective was reading this young staff person his legal rights as he was taken away to jail. These are examples of circumstances that come to mind that you almost certainly will never learn in college. Effective communication and decisive leadership skills would be considered essential ingredients for success in your career because nightmares do occur.

#### Potential Problem in Locker rooms

Most fitness facilities inform their members to secure their valuables (money, keys, phone, and jewelry) in a locked locker or not bring them to the facility at all. Yet some folks feel that being a victim of a crime will never happen to them. Members think that at a faith based facility, these crimes just don't occur. Yet locker rooms in JCC & YMCA facilities are a popular target for theft. Property theft isn't the only concern; in some cases, thieves remove just one credit card or form of ID from lockers and proceed to "steal" someone's identity without the victim knowing until long after the damage is done.

According to Kristen A Walsh, a content editor for the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub (IHRSA) says the following tips can help prevent theft in your facility locker areas.

“Front-desk personnel should make eye contact with all patrons and visitors entering and exiting the facility. The possibility of being identified is a powerful deterrent to would-be thieves.

Require that every guest complete a registration card. Once the card has been filled out, request (and photocopy) a photo ID, and check that the information on these documents match.

Document the time of the visit in case a theft occurs. Have staff conduct frequent, random sweeps of locker rooms. Remind patrons to lock their lockers and that valuable items shouldn't be brought into the club. Pay extra for heavy-duty locks, and discourage members from using combination locks, which are easier to pick than key-type locks. If the facility provides keys for lockers, put the keys on a wristband. Ask members to report suspicious individuals to management right away. Membership tracking software can help identify thieves. When a theft occurs, study the roster and try to identify the possible perpetrators. If there is a pattern when these crimes occur, be sure to heighten locker room security during those times. Lastly, when designing or renovating locker rooms, install lockers at a 45-degree angle to the walls. This not only creates a spacious feel, it also eliminates thief-friendly hiding spots that perpendicular locker rows create”.

### Conducting a Facility Audit

A best practice dictates that the Executive Director and Facility manager tour their facility multiple times each day. The Executive should always make it a habit to walk through the entire building every morning upon arrival to not only visit with staff and members but to see if the building is clean, the equipment is working and in order and all operations are functioning properly. Your stakeholders, members and staff particularly like it when the Executive is accessible and visible while walking/touring thru the facility. It is truly remarkable how being visible enhances the

executive's worth in the organization. Being able to personally identify and prevent any trouble spots before your stakeholders report them to you is just good management.

A regularly scheduled audit should include all sport, wellness and recreation facilities, both indoor and outdoor. The Executive Director and Facility manager can implement an audit on a regular informal basis however one should also be conducted by your Insurance adjustor on a more formal annual basis. A Sports Facility Building Audit is usually conducted for the purpose of evaluating the present condition of the facility. An audit will examine the current physical condition of the facility and hopefully identify any existing risk or safety issues or any corrective maintenance repairs and building system replacement requirements.

The building tour and facility audit should begin with a walk through of your entire facility. Conduct a visual survey of all areas looking for system issues. In addition look for safety concerns and observe equipment in operation. Record and photograph any deficiencies that you might uncover for follow-up. Your written report should document and include the use, misuse, and sometimes abuse of the condition of each piece of equipment, facility systems and its components with further records noting the age, size, location, and any deficiencies found. The final report to the Building and Grounds Committee and ultimately to the agency board of directors should include your complete research and itemization of probable costs in a prioritized fashion, along with any additional options or considerations for repair or replacement supported by all photos keyed to the specific locations.



## Outsourcing

Outsourcing is now a \$450 billion industry. It refers to the practice by which a company delegates certain in-house functions to a third party. Outsourcing has gotten a bad name among many. If you're like most Americans, the word conjures up images of American jobs being shipped off to factories abroad. However, in an environment where nonprofit organizations are increasingly looking to collaborate, outsourcing can be a critical tool for having bigger impact. Outsourcing in the nonprofit sector is still relatively uncommon. A 2006 survey presented 785 nonprofit organizations with a list of 10 common tasks (grant-writing, IT services). Respondents were asked to indicate which tasks were performed in-house. Depending on the task, only 1%-16% used an outsourcing strategy. (<http://newyorkblog.foundationcenter.org>)

What exactly is outsourcing? Outsourcing involves paying a separate company for services that the nonprofit organization might ordinarily do on its own. In relation to sports management, a facility manager could outsource many of the services offered to customers. Some services that are commonly outsourced include food service, security, landscaping, housekeeping, and marketing. There are many advantages and disadvantages for outsourcing these various services. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to decide on whether or not outsourcing will be effective for the organization.

One of the greatest advantages of outsourcing is receiving quality service. Outside companies that are hired for outsourcing services usually focus on providing only one service, which of course gives them a great deal of expertise in that field. For example, if an ED outsourced his landscaping and snow removal services, that company would be much more knowledgeable

about landscaping and therefore be able to do a better job. Another positive aspect of outsourcing is that it involves limited liability. When a service is outsourced, that company is responsible and held liable for anything that could possibly go wrong, which helps the Executive Director in terms of risk management.

In general, outsourcing allows any executive to focus on other things and not have to worry about the outsourced services. For example, a JCC or YMCA that has outsourced their food service will not have to deal with the extra work of hiring food service employees and ordering food and supplies. This will give the executive more time to concentrate on other aspects of his/her operation.

Outsourcing can also have negative effects on your JCC or YMCA, and there are also disadvantages as well. One of the main disadvantages is that outsourced employees will not be nearly as knowledgeable about your organization. Outsourced employees might not be familiar with the entire organizations vision, mission, or goals. Therefore, outsourced employees might not be able to offer the same amount of customer service, simply because they are not familiar with the organization. Another disadvantage to outsourcing is that it limits the Executive Director's ability to be in control. While outsourcing leads to limited liability, which is usually considered positive, this also means limited control. An executive is not directly in control of outsourced employees because those employees answer first to their own company. For example, a facility manager could hire an outsourcing company that has a few negligent employees that do not offer a high level of customer service, and the facility manager would not be able to discipline these employees.

Finally, if an agency is motivated in cutting operating expenses to save money, then outsourcing a service to a third party may not always be a cheaper alternative. In many cases outsourcing costs much more than if you provided that service yourself. An Executive Director should ask, “What do I know about running a food/catering service?” My practice always dictated to outsource any or all possible services that you can, even if it costs more. My philosophy and goal was to provide the very best services to my members in all areas. Food companies, landscaping companies, and I/T companies have the expertise that you’ll never have. These companies also have greater purchasing power and the equipment to do the job more efficiently and effectively.

In conclusion, facility management includes every aspect of ensuring a building is functioning in terms of safety, visibly appealing & clean, revenue production, event management, tenant satisfaction, and preventative maintenance. It is the job of the executive along with his maintenance staff to ensure safe and efficient operations of the facility. It’s important to hire a facility manager who has been trained properly and has much experience because they hold more value towards the organization. It is important to compensate your facility manager well. This is because a skilled facility manager will most likely save you an equivalent of five times their salary in the efficient of running your building. Along with a highly experienced facility manager must be a staff who have a high level of service and understand the key elements for success in this position. Every employee or volunteer within the agency should all focus on achieving the same goals, and ensure they are providing a safe and clean environment for themselves and their customers.

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